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Emergent Technology Paper

Office 365 Free for Students

Microsoft announced in late June that they would be offering Microsoft Office free for all students. Microsoft Office 365 is similar to Google Apps, but

Microsoft seems to be offering even more tools. What is even more exciting is that Office 365 is in the cloud, so schools will not have to pay for any additional servers and other technical materials.

365 includes tools like Microsoft Apps, Lync Online (for conferences and communications), SharePoint Online (a document sharing and collaboration tool), and Exchange Online (the enterprise version of Microsoft’s email, calendar, and contacts management system). With this online software, teachers and staff can build web pages for their courses, communicate and interact with students, teach lessons virtually, and manage incoming and outgoing documents.

Anthony Salcito, the vice president of worldwide education for Microsoft said that the reason why Microsoft can offer this produce for free to schools is because of the great success that they had with Office 365 among corporations and business. In additional to this, it also appears to be another direct attempt at competing with Google and their cloud based applications.

Another benefit of using 365 is the fact that the applications will work across most platforms and devices. It will also integrate smoothly with the software that schools are currently using. This in addition with the fact that it is cloud based means no installation and little to no maintenance. Teachers and students can also work from home or on any computer in the world. Microsoft has stated that if the schools would like to use the non-cloud based 365, they would have to pay for it in full. I don’t really see too many schools making the later decision.

Some schools have already been listed as registered participants. One example of this is Dartmouth College. Dartmouth, which has about 10,000 staff, faculty, and students, will begin using Office 365. This shows that basically anyone with an .edu email address is welcome to participate. The Tennessee Department of Education will also be using Office 365 in their K-12 schools. This includes 136 districts, for a total of 1,677 schools.

Cameron Evans, the chief technology officer for Microsoft Education spoke at the ISTE 2012 conference in San Diego during the release. Evans said "This is a huge opportunity because we're providing a level of service to schools for free that only our corporate accounts have been able to enjoy so far." This is very exciting for school districts, especially ones with low budgets for technology. It will also be a great way for students to learn great 21st century technology skills. It will be interesting to see if the School District of Philadelphia has any plans to move in to Office 365.

Sources:

\* <http://campustechnology.com/Articles/2012/06/27/Microsoft-Launches-Office-365-Free-for-Education.aspx?Page=3>

\* <http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/marketplacek12/2012/06/microsoft_will_offer_its_office.html>